

of both the company and the Natives, especially when some lands (over 70,000 acres) belonging to myself and my near relatives got into the hands of the company. The company endeavoured to obtain from the Government power to settle these transactions, but was not successful, and over £30,000 of Native money has been paid to the Crown in the way of stamp duties. Then the Native Land Settlement Company sold all its rights to the present company, and some time afterwards I went to England to raise money to pay off this company. When I had been promised the necessary money, the Government, of which Sir Harry Atkinson was then the head, wired to England opposing my plans. The consequence was that I was unable to carry them out. When I returned to New Zealand I had an interview with Sir Harry Atkinson, and told him that he had not acted right. "You have received £30,000 from this land in duties," I said, "and why oppose me now? If, in consequence of your action, my people lose their land, who is going to redress their grievances? Will you do it?" Ultimately, Sir Harry Atkinson offered to cable to England to Mr. W. L. Rees, asking him to remain in England and continue negotiations. The reply came that Mr. Rees had left England four days previously, and it was decided to wait till his arrival in the colony. When he did arrive, it was arranged that two Ministers of the Crown (Messrs. Mitchelson and Richardson) should go to Gisborne and inspect the land with a view to the Government taking it over. They reported that if the lands were put into the market they would not realise the money spent on them. When the transfer was made to the new company the lands were put into the market, and £60,000—perhaps more—was obtained. Some of the lands, however, remain, and these it is that are affected by this petition. Summonses were issued by me in respect to some land of my own, and the bank asked me to withdraw the summonses. Some land called Maraetaha No. 1, which belonged to the whole of the tribe, they promised to sell. I wanted to consider the interests of the tribe, and, on the bank's promise, I withdrew my summons, and also stipulated that these other lands should be handed over to Mr. Carroll and myself. As to the petitioners, they belong to the Ngatiporou Tribe, and they were among those whom I advised not to take any money from the company. The exact meaning of the petition is that, having received money from the company, they now petition against that same company. What Mr. Carroll and myself desire to do is simply to get the Natives' lands all together, and to manage them so that they will return a profit. I want Parliament to legislate to enable us to do this. As to the Ngatiporou Natives, the heads of the hapus are paying the interest on the money they received. One of the worst features of this matter is the vast amount that has been paid to lawyers. In one district alone they received £14,000. I think I am quite safe in saying that altogether over £20,000 has been spent. The Validation Court allows these lawyers to go before it, and take up time day after day, and not a single block of land has been completed; and, while this was going on, these lands might have been taken in hand and have been producing revenue to pay off the liabilities. Instead of that, means have been provided for lawyers to return and incur further expenses which have to come out of the lands. I ask this Committee to help to prevent lawyers going before the Court at all. Myself and Mr. Carroll, the Judge, and the manager of the bank or Assets Company are quite competent to deal adequately with the whole of these matters. As to the principal petitioner, Wiremu Pokiha, Mr. Carroll has already given evidence about him; but I wish to add that none of his land is in our hands, and therefore what reason has he to petition the House? I think that the moneys received by these Natives from the company should be refunded to it. I advised them not to take money, but they persisted in doing so: let them pay it back. Having spent the money, they come here and petition, and say they have been deceived. Nobody tried to deceive them or to coax them to offer their land. They went to the company entirely on their own free-will. Another matter is in regard to lands to which there was no title. The agreement was that these lands should be handed over to the company whenever they were clothed with titles. The people who lost by these transactions were those whose lands were paying interest, and upon those moneys received by other people are incurring a heavy burden. Why, these petitioners are dancing with joy over the position: they have to pay nothing, and are having a good laugh at others who have to pay. The fact is, these Natives would not have done this thing had it not been for the lawyer, Apirana Ngata, who is acting for Messrs. Cooper and Devore. He it was who told the Maoris that the company had no claims on their lands, and that if they put this matter into his hands they would get their lands back again. And now the Natives have spent over £20,000, and the lawyers have not been able to bring back one single acre. Of course, Judge Batham has only recently been appointed, but during his time the lawyers come to the Court just the same, and there is no end to them. The fact is, the land is being eaten up by the lawyers, by the Court, and to a certain extent by the Government. Not a sixpence has been returned yet, and the endeavour of myself and Mr. Carroll is to save something for the Natives. Some time ago I advised Judge Batham to hold over this case of the petitioners till I discussed it with the tribe. When I did so they did not say anything condemnatory to me; on the contrary, they approved of what I said. I repeat that it is all the work of this young lawyer Ngata. These lands mentioned in the petition were not taken into the Validation Court by us. There was a block put into the Court by them, but which it was I do not know. It was not even on our instigation that these blocks were put in. Had it not been for the lawyers, the whole thing would have been settled long ago, and the lands would now be productive. I repeat that no lands of Wiremu Pokiha's are in our hands.

18. *The Chairman.* But there are 653 others?—There is only one case, Ngamoe. You will have to approach Mr. De Latour in this matter, because the others withdrew their applications.

19. *Mr. Heke.* These claims have not been actually withdrawn yet?—They have been withdrawn only until such time as the people are able to meet. Ngamoe was the only block in which proceedings were commenced in Court. In regard to this Settlement Company, I have not a single share in it. I would like to say, in conclusion, that Mr. Carroll and myself, as trustees, have paid all expenses out of our own pockets. I have paid £5,000 and Mr. Carroll has paid £800 or more. We receive no benefit from these lands, but we wish to see the tribe benefited. I have never